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The Titles of the Psalms

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THE specific purpose is to consider the significance of the titles of the psalms in relation to the chronological arrangement of the smaller collections.

In Briggs' Commentary on the Psalms, as is well known, is given a very full and generally satisfactory view of the smaller collections which preceded the present psalter and on which it was based. This is derived from the titles, the dominating idea being that several titles, principally those that have often been thought to denote authorship, are the titles of these small collections, the title of the collection having been given to the individual psalm when it was used in another collection, or at the final compilation of the whole psalter. In Briggs' chronological arrangement of the collections, however, no consideration is given to the order of arrangement of the titles. Presumably some system was observed in this matter, the new title being either prefixed or affixed to those already present. My suggestion is that it was prefixed, and that thus, with certain limitations, the titles show the chronological arrangement of the collections. Obviously, as will appear, if there was any custom it must have been this, it could not have been that of affixing the title.

The order of arrangement which Briggs gives is chronological, except that in some cases, as will appear, he dates two collections at approximately the same time, and is as follows: Miktam, Heb. מִכְתָּם, 6 psalms, middle Persian period; Maskil, Heb. מִשְׁכִּיל, 13 psalms, late Persian period; David, Heb. לְדָוִד,

74 psalms, late Persian period; Korah, Heb. לְבִנְיָקָרַח, 11 psalms, early Greek period; Asaph, Heb. לְאַסָּף, 12 psalms, early Greek period; Mizmor, Heb. מִזְמוֹר, 57 psalms, early Greek period; Elohist psalter, no title, psalms 42-83, middle Greek period; Director's psalter, Heb. לְמַנְצֵחַ, 55 psalms, middle Greek period; Hallel, Heb. הַלְלוּיָהּ, 18 psalms, Greek period, enlarged in Maccabean period; Pilgrim psalms, Heb. שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹת, once שִׁיר לְמַעֲלֹת, 15 psalms, 120-134, middle Greek period.

The Hallel and the Pilgrim psalms have no titles besides these, and hence were in no other collection. Four of the Pilgrim psalms have in the present text, to be sure, the title David, but this must be a mistake, as Briggs says. No psalm is in both Maskil and Mizmor. No psalm is in more than one of the following: David, Asaph, Korah.

The principle above indicated makes possible the chronological arrangement of all the collections except the Elohist psalter, the Hallel, and the Pilgrim psalms, these exceptions being for the reason just indicated. These three collections are, therefore, not here considered. The arrangement of the other collections, according to the principle indicated, is as follows: Miktam, David, Asaph, Maskil, Mizmor, Korah, Director's. Maskil and Mizmor might be transposed, as no psalm occurs in both; also David and Asaph, for the same reason. The order of titles is fairly uniform in favor of this arrangement. The exceptions form only a small proportion, and are probably due to textual causes, some dislocation for that reason, in the nature of the case, being inevitable. The regular order and the exceptions are as follows. The regular order, David Miktam, four times, the reverse twice; the regular order Maskil David five times, the reverse once; the regular order Mizmor David twenty-nine times, the reverse seven times; the regular order Maskil Asaph twice, the reverse none; the regular order Mizmor Asaph seven times, the reverse twice; the regular order Korah Maskil twice, the reverse once; the regular order Korah Mizmor five times, the reverse once, not considering psalm 88, which has two complete inconsistent titles, the first, Mizmor Korah, being usually considered a later addition; the regular order Director preceding all others in all cases, fifty five times, psalm 88 being

understood as just stated. The place of the musical directions is in harmony with this view, and in fact favorable to it. These, in twenty nine psalms, were doubtless added in the Director's psalter, as Briggs says. Except in psalm 46, where they come after Korah as well as Director, and are followed by שִׁיר, these musical directions in every case immediately follow Director.